

won't be in session, I rise today to register my appreciation for the staff members who allow me to serve the people of the Fourth District of North Carolina.

The current political and media environment is not always an easy one for congressional staff to operate in, yet, every year, the staffers working in my North Carolina district offices help thousands of constituents navigate Federal agencies. They reach out to local businesses, governments, and other organizations, and help constituents access needed support.

In Washington, D.C., our office staff researches thousands of pieces of legislation. They help me communicate with hundreds of thousands of constituent communications, and help welcome constituents to Washington. And they join me in meetings with constituent groups and local and State representatives and universities and businesses—every imaginable group.

So the list of tasks is long, but all of them help ensure that the people of the Fourth District of North Carolina have a voice in the people's House. Simply put, these staff members that serve all of us represent the very best of public service. I and the people of North Carolina are grateful for their service.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of their dedication and diligence, I would like to include in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the names of each of my staff currently employed in my office:

Nadia Alston, Katelynn Anderson, Sonia Barnes, Nora Blalock, Bayly Hassell, Asher Hildebrand, James Hunter, Lawrence Kluttz, Tracy Lovett, Sean Maxwell, Neel Mandavilli, Dave Russell, Samantha Schiffrin, Anna Tilghman, Justin Wein, Leigh Whitaker, and Robyn Winneberger.

I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, for the effort that these staff members continue to put forth and for the opportunity that Employee Appreciation Day gives me and others to honor their service.

HONORING THE 23RD ANNUAL VERA HOUSE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

(Mr. KATKO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against domestic violence and sexual abuse. As a former Federal prosecutor for 20 years, I have seen firsthand how domestic violence affects people of all ages, races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner. We must work together to end this abuse.

Central New York is home to Vera House, an organization that works to prevent and respond to domestic and sexual abuse. Yesterday, Vera House kicked off its 23rd Annual White Ribbon Campaign in central New York.

This campaign raises awareness for the need to put an end to domestic violence and sexual abuse.

This month, thousands of central New Yorkers will be wearing a white ribbon like I have on today, or a white wristband, to stand in solidarity against domestic and sexual violence.

I urge my House colleagues to join me in wearing a white ribbon to demonstrate a personal pledge to work towards preventing violence against men, women, and children.

□ 0915

REGULATORY INTEGRITY ACT OF 2017

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 1004.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KATKO). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 156 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1004.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SIMPSON) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 0916

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1004) to amend chapter 3 of title 5, United States Code, to require the publication of information relating to pending agency regulatory actions, and for other purposes, with Mr. SIMPSON in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MITCHELL) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 1004 is sponsored by Representative TIM WALBERG, my colleague from Michigan. Cosponsors include Representative FARENTHOLD, Representative MEADOWS, Representative GOSAR, and myself.

I rise today in support of H.R. 1004, the Regulatory Integrity Act of 2017.

Every year, agencies promulgate thousands of new regulations and impose billions of dollars in regulatory costs on the American public. Those rules are conceived of, developed, written, and imposed by unelected agency officials—bureaucrats.

In return for the authority to issue regulations, Congress and the American people require two simple things from agencies. First, agencies must inform the public about their intended regulatory actions—early and accurately—to provide ample time for thoughtful feedback and consideration from the public. Second, we want the agencies to listen to what the public has to say about the proposed regulatory action.

Making sure the public has an opportunity to participate in this process is key. The public comment period is an essential part of upholding our democratic values. It ensures Americans have a voice heard in the Federal Government's regulatory process.

H.R. 1004 helps preserve and strengthen the integrity of the public comment process in several ways. First, the bill defines the parameters of how an agency should communicate when asking for and offering a proposal and asking for public feedback. H.R. 1004 requires the agency to identify itself in communications on the proposal. Imagine that. We ask them to identify themselves. The agency must clearly state whether it is accepting comments or considering alternatives.

Most importantly, agency communications during this process must use a neutral, unbiased tone. This bill requires agencies to do only what you would expect them to do if the request for feedback was genuine and sincere. This bill will uphold the purpose and value of the notice and comment process enshrined in the Administrative Procedures Act.

When issuing new regulations, agencies must provide notice of the regulation and accept comments from the public before finalizing the regulation. Often, regulated entities, small businesses, and subject-matter experts can provide new insights and perspectives agency officials simply do not have and do not understand. The notice and comment period allows the public to provide valuable insight to the agencies to help them make better regulations, more effective regulations, and minimize the adverse impacts.

However, not every agency takes this opportunity to really listen to the public. Often, agencies develop a proposed regulation and assume it is the end of the story. In effect, agencies reduce the notice and comment process to checking the box.

A perfect example, unfortunately, is when EPA developed the waters of the United States rule, known as WOTUS. EPA's behavior during the notice and comment period indicated that the EPA had little interest in listening to the public. Quite the contrary.

EPA used Thunderclap, an online social media platform, to disseminate government-sourced messages through unaffiliated individuals to encourage the public to provide positive comments. They did not identify themselves and used a third party to source comments that would support their